



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

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COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION: THE KEY TOWARDS A WATER-SMART SOCIETY

UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event: OS240

Wednesday 22th March 2023, 13:15 – 14:45
Permanent Mission of Belgium, New York



Organized by:

Partners: Water4All partnership, Water Europe, G-STIC CAP, Antea Group, Protos Andes – Join For Water, ENABEL, Young Water Solutions, AVEDEC Burundi, Government of Flanders (Belgium), ANR, Unesco, CNR, Bosaq.

Background on the event

The Water-Smart Society model with “value water” in the core, developed by Water Europe, indicates how the innovation concepts are interrelated, and together generate a ‘flying wheel’ effect. The side event showcased effective water actions that subscribe the need of collaboration to strive real innovative solutions: the Blue Deal in Flanders, Belgium has an ambitious action-oriented approach that speed up the transition towards a more resilient water system, innovative water quality monitoring in the Lake Tanganyika in East-Africa and funding mechanisms for transboundary river basin collaboration in the Mayo-Chincipe basin in Latin-America.

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Water Action Agenda

Commitments done by different partners:

- G-STIC Climate Action Programme: [G-STIC Climate Action Programme: Project Call 2022 \(gstic.org\)](https://gstic.org)
- Water4All [Water Security for the Planet \(water4all-partnership.eu\): https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/build-water-smart-society-europe](https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/build-water-smart-society-europe)
- Team Europe Initiative
- Water-Smart Society: [Water-Smart Society Water Europe: Build a Water-Smart Society in Europe | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](https://un.org)
- Enabel – DGD - VITO conference April 2023: [Conference: 'Is Climate change adaptation all about water?' | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](https://un.org)

Key Issues discussed

- Involve and support young entrepreneurs and young citizens in the water action, in water related research and development, and in the implementation of more solution-focused initiatives;
- Water4All Partnership aims at boosting systemic transformations and changes across the entire water innovation pipeline, fostering the matchmaking between problem owners and solution providers. VITO, Flanders, ANR and Water Europe are amongst the driving forces in this partnership.
- GSTIC climate action program contributes to the Water Action Agenda by funding demonstration and capacity building projects in developing countries to enhance their resilience to climate chaos; and
- Support for research, science and data as a driver of innovative solutions.

Key recommendations for action

- Think about tomorrow: strengthen our young “waterlovers” in research and innovation, and entrepreneurship to build a future generation of strong water experts, also by making sustainability more attractive.
- Water is a dealmaker in achieving sustainable development, given its role as a connector and cross-sectorial importance, and the resource that will be impacted most significantly by climate change. Water need to be at the heart of the climate agenda.
- Water governance on multiple levels is crucial. We need to think big and act local. The Blue Deal in Flanders acts as a gamechanger. A clear vision and active engagement from government at high political level create a dynamic amongst all stakeholders to build jointly a coherent trajectory towards a climate resilient water secure future. The partnerships between policymakers and science and technology communities is crucial to realise this ambition.
- To address the transition of a complex and challenging water management system towards a Water-Smart Society, System thinking can and will be the key approach.
- “It’s not the commitments but the actions and the partnerships that we will make after this conference that matter” – Luc Jacobs, Belgian Ambassador.